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Academic Ethics: Teaching Profession and Teacher Professionalism in Higher Education Settings

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Abstract In the higher education settings, the following questions are discussed and debated in modern times. Is 'teaching' a profession? Are university faculty members professionals? The paper attempts to answer these questions by adopting qualitative methodology that subsumes descriptive, evaluative, and interpretative approaches. While answering these questions, it discusses significance and usefulness of academic ethics in the university set up. It examines role of academic ethics to offer quality education to students. Further, it highlights university faculty members' roles and responsibilities toward students, colleagues, institution authorities, research works, and society at large. The paper submits that teaching in university settings is regarded as a profession, and university faculty members are regarded as professionals provided they perform their duties conforming to the teacher's code of ethics.

Keywords Academic ethics · Higher education · Teaching · Teacher's responsibilities · Profession · Professionalism · Code of ethics

Introduction

In this paper, the expressions 'university faculty member' and 'higher education teacher' are used synonymously and interchangeably, as these expressions refer to assistant professors, associate professors, and professors of Indian higher education (HE) system. HE teachers are recruited for teaching and research works. They teach a variety of courses to students based on their expertise, research interests, and subject knowledge. With regard to engaging classes, they act as *facilitators*, not as *course teachers* (Bucklow and Clark 2000; Loughran 2014; Margalef and Roblin 2016). The facilitators ignite a passion in learners' mind to engage in self-study and motivate them to be self-assessed learners. *Course teachers,* on the other hand, transmit textbook information to the students in the classroom, and thereby communicate basic

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and fundamental information of a subject to the students. Teaching being an essential component of HE settings, it is directly associated with HE teachers. According to Macfarlane and Ottewill (2005) and Krishnaveni and Anitha (2007), university teaching requires teachers' interest in teaching, impeccable integrity in teaching and learning tasks, and development of professional culture. Devlin and Samarawickrema (2010) claim that teaching, in university, is a scholarly activity that draws on extensive professional skills and practices and expertise on disciplinary knowledge. Further, it is stated that society attests which occupation is to be treated as a profession (Sethy 2015; Harris et al. 2014). In this context, questions arise; Is teaching a 'profession'? Are HE teachers 'professionals'? How is the HE teachers' profession construed? Does society acclaim 'teaching' a profession and university faculty members professionals? These questions have not been examined in detail in the HE literature. So, the purpose of the paper is to critically examine these questions with reference to present higher education scenario in India.

Is Teaching a "Profession" in a University Set up?

Prof. Radhakrishnan commission report (1948) on Indian higher education system suggests that university teaching must fulfill three objectives for teaching to be considered a profession. First, to transmit the intellectual and ethical heritage of humanity to the young. Second, to enrich this heritage and extend the boundaries of knowledge. Third, to develop one's personality. In short, with respect to teaching, HE teachers must stimulate the young mind to develop the ability to comprehend course contents from all possible perspectives.

According to Davis (1999), university teaching is a profession because 'teaching' refers to imparting knowledge, skill, or judgment with a beneficent intention. Teaching benefits the taught (p.42). Davis defines, "A profession is a number of individuals in the same occupation voluntarily organized to earn a living by openly serving a certain moral ideal in a morally permissible way beyond what law, market, and morality would otherwise require" (Davis 1999, p.43).

Sachs (2016) expresses that faculty members of HE institutions are accountable for their performance cultures. Performance cultures subsume quality of teaching, objectifying students' learning outcomes, and meeting societal expectations. She further enunciates that the scope and remit of teaching standards define 'teaching' as a profession (p.417). Teaching is associated with two types of accountability: contractual and responsive (Halstead 1994). Contractual accountability deals with how faculty members fulfill societal expectations in terms of teaching standards, students' performance in a course, and course results. With regard to contractual accountability, people gauge the worthiness of a degree or a diploma program in a university based on its faculty members' teaching standards, students' performances, and course results. Responsive accountability refers to faculty members' decision-making abilities that integrate into their tasks and as a result, they could practice self-regulation and contribute to achieve institutional goals. Mockler (2005) expresses that university teaching is regarded as a profession because teachers are creative designers of curriculum and innovative pedagogues. They are accountable for their creative works.

According to Gluchmanova (2015), university teaching is a profession because teachers clarify students' doubts, set the criteria for assessment and evaluation, and communicate the same to students at the beginning of each semester, deliver lectures on time, and ensure cognitive, intellectual and moral progress of students. Teachers, overall, discharge their duties

to students professionally and thereby satisfy societal expectations. Horvath et al. (2018) enunciate that teaching in university set-up strengthens faculty members' affinity for teaching and helps in building an identity as teachers. It is a professional task. Marica (2013) explains that teaching in a university set-up is regarded as a profession because teachers involved in university teaching own double status: a moral agent and a trainer. A moral agent possesses an impeccable behavior, such as honesty, fair mindedness, unbiased approach, etc., and as a trainer, a teacher assists students to build their character, aim for moral virtues, such as responsibility, courage, kindness, patience, self-discipline, compassion, respecting others etc. Glazer (2008) claims that the society attests teaching in higher education is a profession, as it requires certain level of skills, intelligence and expertise, which ordinary citizen of a state may not possess. Stevenson and Carter ve Passy (2007) state that 'professionalism' in teaching means meeting certain standards in education with proficiency. It is an essential element that enhances effectiveness in HE faculty members' work culture and professional life. Newlyn (2015) expresses that teaching in higher education settings is essentially regarded as a profession. It is so because it gives rise to all other professions, such as accounting, law, medicine, business, etc. He argues that "if non-professionals are asked to produce graduate professionals, then society will suspect on the quality of the graduates that university educators produce." (p.113).

Bucklow and Clark (2000), and Macdonald (1995) define 'teaching' as a profession that has the following features.

i.   HE teachers have expertise on the areas of their teaching.
ii.   Their actions lead to the benefit of the students, thereby society.
iii. They have an ability to apply the teacher's code of ethics to their tasks.

From the above analyses, it is asserted that teaching in university settings is regarded as 'profession'. So, what about faculty members who are involved in teaching profession? Are they regarded as professionals?

Samuels (1970) and Leiter (1978) convey that teaching is a semi-professional job. It is so because HE teachers are directed by their superiors/higher authorities to perform certain tasks and maintain certain standards in the tasks. Even though HE teachers have the skills, intelligence, and required expertise to perform a task well by using alternative methods, they do not get 'autonomy' to exercise their decision-making abilities while performing the tasks. This affects their responsive accountability. This is found in some university settings, where teachers' autonomy on pedagogical delivery, instructional design, assessment pattern, final grade sheet preparation, etc. of a course is compromised to a large extent.

David (2000), Kennedy (2007), Yorke (2008), and Demirkasimoglu (2010) enunciate that HE teachers are to be treated as professionals upon satisfying the following features.

a)   The respectability status of the occupation
b)   Improvement of service quality
c)   Achievement of the highest standards
d)   Self-control/Self-regulation
e)   Professional autonomy

Members of a profession are responsible to protect their dignity as they have entered into the quasi agreement (David 2000) of their profession by receiving a degree from an accrediting

institution. They are expected to perform tasks that command respect from the society, as society decides which occupation is to be treated as profession.

Society expects faculty members in HE settings should provide 'quality education' to students. Quality education includes assisting students to learn the course contents among others. Offering quality education requires that faculty members are aware of the code of ethics to perform their tasks in their workplace. Unfortunately, in India, no code of ethics is enshrined for faculty members. At best, we can say University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi has prescribed certain norms and guidelines for HE teachers in the document entitled "Regulations on minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges (Gazette of India, Part III, June 30, 2010)". In some institutions in India, such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), National Institute of Technology (NIT), etc. students' feedback on the course is collected at the end of the semester. However, hardly any measures are taken in response to students' negative feedback on the course. No responsibility is fixed on faculty members for their teaching-learning tasks.

Faculty members are expected to render their services professionally and aligned to the set standards for others to emulate. It is said that a child is born in a family bearing a name, caste, and religion, but his/her ideology and understanding about worldly affairs are construed and/or modified by faculty members. So, faculty members give a 'new life' to students. As a result, they would see the world from multiple as well as unique perspectives. In India, it is reported that some of the university faculty members indulge in unethical practices in multiple ways, but no action has been taken against them by the accrediting bodies (Puhan et al. 2014; Garg and Kaur 2012; Harish 2011). The reason is, no ethical codes are enshrined to evaluate faculty members' actions in HE settings. Therefore, faculty members' actions that do not conform to the societal expectations become legal issues, not professional issues. In some cases, faculty members are punished by honorable judges of the courts (Verma 2011; Shapira 2008).

Faculty members also have the responsibility of improving the service qualities of teaching and research activities. However, lack of teacher's code of ethics leaves faculty members unaware of what actions are to be treated professionally right and wrong. For them, an action is to be performed based on the general ethics and in rare occasions based on personal ethics. Both general ethics and personal ethics are subjective in nature, and hence HE teachers in India, in a strict sense, would not be treated as professionals.

Faculty members employ their best skills and intelligence for teaching-learning activities, and in the process, set standards for others to emulate the standards. They need to ensure that they provide quality education to students. Providing quality education to students includes teaching through appropriate instructional design, pedagogical delivery of a course and engaging in research works. Professor Radhakrishnan commission report (1948) mentions, "unless high standards of teaching and examinations are maintained research will suffer. If research is neglected by HE teachers, their teaching will lack vitality and will rapidly become stale" (p.74). Huisman et al. (2002) write that HE teachers must 'raise the bar' to a level while offering their services to students, which would not be easy for semi-professionals to achieve. In India, for the sake of achieving high standards, HE accreditation bodies such as The University Grants Commission (UGC), All Indian Council for Technical Education (AICTE), etc. have recommended Academic Performance Indicator (API) scores for faculty members. Faculty members need to earn API scores by publishing research papers in International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) journals and books with ISBN number. But, whether published papers with ISSN journals are to be considered as quality research work or not, is not

taken into consideration. In the name of accumulating API scores, faculty members publish several low quality research works. In some instances, plagiarizing others' works is also common. HE teachers in India publish these research papers to merely accumulate API scores for promotion and acquire other academic benefits. Clearly, pursuing research work merely for accumulating API scores disrupts quality of academic works.

The concept of 'self-control' signifies the ways faculty members efficiently manoeuver in a given situation. In the HE context, students mostly replicate their faculty members' behavior in their academic as well as personal life. So, faculty members should take utmost care in behaving appropriately in every context (Shortt et al. 2012). 'Self-control' subsumes controlling one's emotions towards colleagues, students, and other stakeholders. Barrett et al. (2012) mention that faculty members violate professional code of conduct on four aspects. These are: personal harm, grade adulteration, carelessness in tasks, and ignorance about the difference between personal and professional works. Faculty members need to be mindful of these four aspects for the growth of the teaching profession.

In India, HE teachers are penalized for their unethical and illegal behaviors toward students. In many instances, HE teachers indulge in grade adulteration (awarding students a grade that he/she does not deserve), as a result of favoritism toward some students (Hanna and Linden 2012; Gupta 2015). In some instances, HE teachers face consequences for indulging in plagiarism (Mishra 2013; Acharya 2005). Since a comprehensive teacher's code of ethics is not available to guide their actions/behaviors, they ponder about their actions; they are unsure about what actions are to be treated as professionally correct and what actions are to be treated as wrong.

The notion of 'teacher's autonomy' in the HE settings mean HE teachers shall enjoy the freedom to design instruction of their course and do research on the topic/issue of their interest. Further, they should take responsibility of their performed tasks and be accountable for the tasks. In India, HE teachers are generally asked to teach a course based on a fixed syllabus formulated and approved by the accrediting bodies even though most of its contents demand revision. Faculty members are not allowed to revise the course syllabus and supply the updated information to the students as deemed fit. Hence, autonomy of HE teachers is affected to a great extent. In some HE institutions in India, faculty members are asked to teach a course on which they lack expertise. Here, faculty members are compelled to do something that restricts them from availing autonomy in the workplace. Certain HE institutions even compel faculty members to acquire research projects from various agencies irrespective of their research interests on the research project/topics. This leads to substandard research outputs. The lack of opportunity for faculty members to do research on the topics of their interest raises questions about their 'autonomy' in their work place. In most of the cases, faculty members are under the surveillance of their higher authorities and thereby under organizational control. Faculty members in India are thus not to be treated as professionals.

Professionals have codes of ethics to carry out their tasks. For example, engineers have engineering code of ethics, doctors have medical code of ethics, and lawyers have legal code of ethics, etc. Professionals are different from occupationists. Occupationists do not need to earn a certificate through extensive training to do a task. They need not to bear any specialized knowledge to do a task. They do not enjoy the 'autonomy' in the workplace. They are supervised by their boss(es) or higher authority(ies). An occupationist is paid for what (s)he produces, but professionals are paid for their skills and knowledge. Professionals possess specialized knowledge to perform a task. To possess the specialized knowledge, they go through rigorous training and receive certificate for their achievements. Professionals profess

to the world something of great value for the greater good. Professionals are recognised with two features; control condition (control over a specialized body of knowledge) and knowledge condition (a commitment to use his/her knowledge for the welfare of the society). Some examples can clarify the differences between profession and occupation. Designing a building would be treated as 'profession' whereas constructing a building is an 'occupation'. Operating a diesel locomotive engine is an 'occupation', whereas designing an engine, which requires a degree in mechanical engineering or a license to work on diesel engines, is a 'profession'.

It is necessary for professionals to avail 'autonomy' in their workplace to bring out quality outputs. Professionals need to perform the tasks by confirming to their code of ethics as they are answerable to the society for their decisions-cum-actions. 'Professionalism' describes the qualities, skills, competence and behaviors expected of individuals belonging to a profession. According to Charles (1999), "Professionalism is a service through the use of specialized knowledge, skills, and experience; holding oneself to the highest standards of thought, word, and deed"(p.35). Professionalism, thus, is the manifestation of the optimal attitudes and behaviors advocated in the profession.

Profession, Code of Ethics, and HE Teachers in India

The accreditation bodies of each and every country accredit higher education (HE) institutions to fulfill an important objective among others, i.e. to offer quality education to students. To attain this objective, accreditation bodies formulate norms and guidelines from time to time. A question arises, "Are these norms and guidelines to be treated as ethical codes of conduct for HE teachers?" In India, The University Grants Commission (UGC) - an accreditation body, mentions that an Assistant Professor of a university should be available six hours in his/her office on a working day. He/she should take more teaching load than a professor of that university. Assistant Professors and Professors must work sixteen and fourteen hours respectively in a week in their university, etc. In the strict sense of profession and professionalism, these norms are not treated as ethical codes for faculty members, because ethical codes are not subjective. It ought to be objective and applicable to each and every member of a profession irrespective of his/her position and designation. For example, a junior and a senior doctor will treat a patient in a similar way for an identified and diagnosed disease. A young engineer and an experienced engineer will do an engineering task much in the same way.

University Grants Commission (UGC), an accrediting body for HE institutions in India recommends faculty members to take responsibility on the following heads (UGC Regulations: June 30, 2010).

i.   Responsibilities toward students
ii.   Responsibilities toward profession
iii.   Responsibilities toward colleagues
iv.   Responsibilities toward authorities
v.   Responsibilities toward non-teaching staff
vi.   Responsibilities toward society

The faculty-student relationship is a noble one. Faculty members must share their knowledge with students and put their best efforts for the growth and progress of students. They are expected to behave respectfully toward students' opinion on any issue no matter what, and

practice equity in academic context. They must refrain from provoking students against their classmates, faculty members, and administration of the institution.

Faculty members also have obligations toward their profession. They are expected to take research and teaching seriously and share their research findings in different forums for the growth of the profession and benefit of the society. They need to counsel students on a regular basis to boost their confidence on subject learning. According to Meyer and Marx (2014), students' attrition is growing rapidly in HE system because of lack of proper counseling.

Most often it is found that faculty members belonging to a department do not even speak to each other due to their personal and ideological differences (McElveen et al. 2006). As a result, collaborative work is affected. Institutions consider collaborative work indispensable for the achievement of institutional objectives and meeting societal expectations. It is therefore recommended that faculty members, as members of academic profession, should work together along with their peers. They need to speak to each other respectfully and offer help in professional activities for the benefit of the society. No faculty member should be allowed to raise false allegations against his/her peers. Most importantly, they should refrain from allowing considerations of caste, creed, religion, race, and sex in their professional activities.

Higher educational institutions consist of four sections of people; faculty members, authorities, non-teaching staff, and students. Like other professionals, faculty members too have obligations toward each section of people. They are not allowed to take up jobs outside of their institution (e.g. private coaching) without taking prior permission from authorities. They would contribute to the formulation of institution policies and discharge their duties as and when demanded. Without prior intimation, they would desist from taking leaves as responsible professionals. Since non-teaching staffs are part of the institution, faculty members must treat them with respect and cooperate with them for achieving institution's goals and objectives. Faculty members are expected to behave amicably with students' guardians irrespective of students' performance inside and outside the classroom.

Faculty members must treat 'education' as a public service, and learn that they are responsible for strengthening the community's moral and intellectual quotient by providing quality education to students. Further, they should be aware of social problems and innovate solutions to resolve or cease those problems through their research and teaching activities. They need to adhere to the principles that bring peace to the society. They shall desist from involving in religious and linguistic provocation that leads to social disturbances.

A question arises, do all these responsibilities constitute the code of ethics for HE teachers in India? To me, these are merely norms and don't satisfy the features of a profession.

Professional Responsibilities of HE Teachers

Professionals possess two salient features; responsibility and accountability. They take responsibility to perform the tasks and be accountable for the tasks. Responsibility and accountability in this sense are interlinked with each other. According to Poel (2011), responsibility is of two types; forward-looking responsibility and backward-looking responsibility. Forward-looking responsibilities are those where professionals use their emotional intelligence (EI) skills to take appropriate and ethical decisions in a given situation. Sethy (2015) defines emotional intelligence as "skills that subsume self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills" (p.81). Roser (2010) states that emotions like empathy and sympathy could correct the egoistic emotions. So faculty members should critically assess their EI skills and stakeholders'

(students) emotions before taking decisions on academic matters. Compassion, benevolence, empathy, etc. are part of 'forward-looking responsibilities'. In contrast to this, professionals also have 'backward-looking responsibilities', e.g. shame, resentment, guilt, blame etc. Backward-looking responsibilities are known as failed responsibilities. It ascribes negativity toward professional responsibilities. It expresses the tragic incidents happened in the past due to certain mistakes committed by professionals in their tasks. Professionals should learn from these mistakes and must avoid similar mistakes in their future endeavors. Example of a backward-looking responsibility, let's say, mass faculty members recruitment was done by compromising their qualifications and eligibility criteria by a high-powered governing body, comprising of a few faculty members. The consequence of this event would be a disaster for the society. From this event, faculty members (recruiters, recruited, and other faculty members) should learn that this sort of action ought not be repeated in future.

Responsibility and risks are interrelated phenomena, and form a knot. One can't eliminate risk from responsibility and vice versa with regard to professional tasks. Risk is a constituent of professional activity. Faculty members take risks to invent and discover new ideas for the benefit of students and society. They modify the course curriculum, instructional design, and pedagogical delivery of a course, etc. In the process, they learn what risks are acceptable and what risks are not acceptable for the society. It is said that if a risk has high probability of success and less negative effect, then it is acceptable. But if a risk has low probability of success and large negative impact, then it is not acceptable. For example, changing the assessment pattern of a course in the mid semester is acceptable even though it has risk. But, awarding marks/grades to students without assessing their performance is not acceptable. Risks have two components; risk assessment and risk management. The former expresses the identification and quantification of risks, whereas the latter states about acceptability of risks and its societal management. Professionals have six types of responsibilities (Heart 2008; Wolff 2006; Ladd 1991).

i.   Role responsibility (Heart 2008)
ii.   Causal responsibility (Heart 2008)
iii.   Capacity responsibility (Heart 2008)
iv.   Liability responsibility (Heart 2008)
v.   Blame responsibility (Wolff 2006)
vi.   Virtue responsibility (Ladd 1991)

Role responsibility is linked to a specific position of a profession to which particular duties are assigned. For example, a faculty member is responsible for his/her classroom teaching activities. Causal responsibility refers to the cause understood in a quasi-mechanical sense of an event. For example, frequent power cut causes disturbances in the classroom teaching. Capacity responsibility refers to the capacity of a professional to fulfill his/her responsibilities. Capacity implies possessing knowledge about an action and being able to control the action with reasoning. For example, a faculty member is responsible for his/her tainted grade sheet (a grade sheet where students' scores are tampered). Liability responsibility is the legal facet of responsibility. In the HE setup, a faculty member is responsible for his/her misbehavior toward students. Blame responsibility refers to the blame incurred when there is a violation of ethical codes and at the same time one's behaviors/actions are morally culpable. For example, leaking question papers of an examination. Virtue responsibility refers to moral deficiency and not just to fault. It implies the absence of care and concern of professionals while performing tasks. It

describes "how things are and how things should be or should have been". For example, faculty members' indifferent behavior toward teaching and learning tasks is a virtue responsibility. Here, even if faculty members were not really at fault, quality education would still be hampered.

Quality Assurance in HE Settings and Teachers' Code of Ethics

Assuring quality in HE demands fulfillment of a lot of components, such as good faculty members, motivated students, well-equipped and updated infrastructure, etc. According to Joshi (2012), the notion of 'quality' in HE settings is dynamic and subjective, as it has different meaning for different stakeholders. It may mean value for money, fit for the purpose (i.e. attaining the objectives of the program), and fulfillment of vision and mission of an institution. With regard to 'value for money', quality assurance is implied as an accountability to the public and meeting the requirements of the external standards, whereas in case of second and third meanings (i.e. fit for the purpose, and fulfillment of vision and mission of an institution), it is seen as essential for enhancing and maintaining quality of teaching and learning at an institution (Biggs 2001).

Harvey (2006) states that quality assurance in HE settings is linked to teachers' professional characteristics. The teachers' professional characteristics are risk taking for new innovations and new ideas, taking responsibility for students' learning, and commanding respect for the teaching and research performances (Phelps 2006). These professional characteristics are framed in teacher's code of ethics. In this context, Krishnaveni and Anitha (2007) state that teacher's professional characteristics are the fundamental tenets of teacher's code of ethics. The code of ethics does not only guide HE teachers to adopt professionalism in teaching and learning activities but also assure quality in HE settings. Thus, ensuring quality in HE settings is dependent on HE teachers' professional characteristics that compose teacher's code of ethics.

Tichenor and Tichenor (2005) state that "a professional faculty member refers to the status of a person who is paid to teach on a higher level. It can refer to faculty members who represent the best in the profession and set the highest standards" (p. 90). Hoyle (2001) enunciates that professionalism is related to the improvement of the quality of service rather than the enhancement of faculty members' status. According to Macfarlane and Ottewill (2005), professional standards for teaching and learning activities would be maintained through teacher's code of ethics in the higher education settings. Cheung (2015) mentions that most of the accrediting bodies for HE institutions across the globe find that university teachers need to develop professionalism for teaching and learning activities, and this would be possible if teachers would abide to the code of ethics. The code of ethics guides teachers on what actions need to be performed and what actions should not be performed while doing professional activities. In India, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 to assess and accredit HE institutions in the country. One of its objectives was to examine and promote quality education in higher education institutions. But unfortunately, NAAC has not penned the 'code of ethics' for HE teachers to follow and practice in their professional activities.

Hennessey (2004) states that since there is no clear and enforceable code of ethics penned for faculty members, they end up confusing right conducts with misconducts. This is observed especially in faculty members' relationship with students, their classroom behavior, and so on.

A code of ethics is therefore required for faculty members to refer to and engage in professional behavior as demanded by the profession and society at large. A code of ethics would serve three objectives; to protect the public interest, to ensure high standard of faculty members' teaching-learning practice, and to guide faculty members in their decision-making process (Barrett et al. 2012, p.891). If faculty members would learn the code of ethics and perform the tasks conforming to the code of ethics, it would help them in asserting quality education in the HE settings.

According to Englund (1996) and Cheung (2015), professionalism is defined as capacities and competencies for the successful exercise of an occupation. Professionalization implies the status and authority of a profession. Society expects faculty members to act in a professional manner to retain and maintain quality in HE system. Gardner and Hobba (2005) and Cruess et al. (2000) mention that faculty members need to possess the following five features to claim themselves professionals.

i.   Faculty members must possess a set of specialized knowledge that is not easily comprehended by the average citizens.
ii.   They must render their services with their best skills and intelligence in the interest of the students and betterment of the society.
iii. They should exercise autonomy in their workplace.
iv.   They must contribute their research findings to the research groups for the professional growth.
v.   They must formulate a professional community which will be responsible for examining and monitoring the standard practices of professionals and, if necessary, provide training to them.

These features would together help faculty members to develop a professional culture (professionalism) in their workplace to ensure quality in HE. To me, faculty members' professional behavior is essential to offer quality education to the students in a responsible and committed manner.

Some Suggestions for Debate and Consideration

In my opinion, HE teachers would be regarded professionals if and only if they satisfy the following features.

i.   Higher education teachers need to earn the certificate for 'teaching' to enter into HE teaching profession. A state governing body of HE settings (e.g. UGC, AICTE of India) must offer a certificate course to the teaching aspirants through its universities. The grades or scores earned for teachers' performance in certificate course must be considered for teachers' recruitment process. An M.Phil or an equivalent degree needs to be considered as the minimum qualification to enter into teaching profession. It is so because teaching and research in HE must go hand-in-hand to assert quality education.
ii.   Teachers' associations and HE governing bodies must come together to formulate teacher's code of ethics, which would guide teachers to render their services to students, colleagues, institution authorities, research works, and the society at large professionally. This would assist HE teachers to fulfill six types of responsibilities as stated in this paper.

The governing body must possess the legal power to take appropriate actions against the violators of code of ethics. It suggests that HE teachers cannot avoid their responsibilities, as they are accountable for their professional activities.

iii. Teachers in HE settings need to register in the teacher's associations, and by implication, they agree to abide the teacher's code of ethics while performing their tasks. The teacher's code of ethics must protect HE teachers from political persons' and influential authorities' threats for not accepting their requests to indulge in unethical actions in HE settings.

iv. The teacher's code of ethics must grant 'autonomy' to the HE teachers along with certain responsibilities. By exercising their autonomy, HE teachers can develop course curriculum, design the instruction and pedagogical delivery of a course. Further, they can evaluate students' performances and generate final grade sheets.

v. The teachers' code of ethics shall be revisited and modified if required once in three years. It is so because there could be new situations that could have come up in the three years that need to be discussed, debated, and considered while amending rules in the teacher's code of ethics.

HE teachers own the teaching and research profession, as it requires certain level of skills, intelligence, and expertise to practice the profession which ordinary citizens of a state don't possess. Similar to other professions (i.e. accounting, lawyer, medicine, etc.), teaching in HE settings is regarded as a profession. It suggests that there can be a code of ethics for HE teachers to follow while rendering their services to students, colleagues, institution authorities, research works, and society at large. The code of ethics must give autonomy to the HE teachers and at the same time fix responsibilities on them for their professional activities. Thus, the teacher's code of ethics shall not only guide HE teachers to render their services in a professional manner but also protect them from indulging in unethical practices and resolving conflict of interests and commitments that arise while performing the tasks. The teacher's code of ethics must also give strength to the HE teachers to disregard political pressure and influential authorities' unwanted requests to indulge in unethical actions in the HE settings.

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